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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twentieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 517th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 20 January 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Guinea [CRC/C/3/Add.48; HRI/CORE/1/Add.80; CRC/C/3/Q/GUI.1 (list of issues); written replies of the Guinean Government to questions raised in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in French only)]

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Guinea resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that she was concerned about the unrestricted sale of medicines in "yard pharmacies" and asked what the Government was doing to control that practice. On the subject of education, she asked about the participation of parents in school life, particularly the role of parent-teacher and friends of schools associations, and the pupils' own participation in the adoption of decisions affecting them, both at school and in the Ministry of Education. She also requested details on the NAFA centres, the nature and function of which she had not fully understood. Were they apprenticeship centres and were pupils placed there at the end of their training? The Guinean Government's written reply to question 25 on the list of issues suggested that the Convention was taught only in elementary schools. She urged the Government to extend such education to secondary schools. Since there were nearly three times as many colleges as high schools, she wished to know whether the Guinean education system encouraged short-term education. She also wished to know the composition of the Equity Committee set up to promote schooling for girls and what progress had been made. In conclusion, she inquired whether the projects described in paragraphs 149, 150 and 151 of the report had been evaluated and extended to other schools and which of the projects cited in paragraph 158 had been implemented. She thought it would be wise for priorities to be established in that regard.

3. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked for details on mechanisms for monitoring the enforcement of the law governing the obligation of maintenance and on the maintenance-allowance ceiling. On the subject of disabled children, she had learned with interest that there were prevention programmes and procedures, but asked, firstly, whether those children's rights were protected by statutory provisions and, if so, whether they were effectively enforced and, secondly, whether members of certain professions, such as architects, were aware of and trained to meet the needs of disabled persons. She also requested additional information on the nature of the problems encountered in the anti-malaria campaign.

4. Mrs. PALME said that, since few political activities were open to children, she wished to know what methods were used to develop their sense of democracy.

5. Mr. RABAH, referring to chapter IV. F of the report, said that he wished to know how the Government monitored children's homes and foster care institutions. He also asked about the Republic of Guinea's stance on adoption and abortion, since it had not expressed any reservation to the Convention, but those practices were condemned by the Shariah.

6. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea), referring to the question of sexual abuse, said that the Penal Code imposed long prison terms and heavy fines on child abusers, but it made no provision for helping victims overcome their trauma because the lack of resources had prevented the necessary reception infrastructure from being set up. However, certain social workers in the counselling and reception centres planned for children living in difficult situations would probably receive specialized training. On the subject of the trade in children, she pointed out that, in Africa, a child was looked after by the community as much as by its parents, so that the risk was minimized. Thus far, there had only been one case of attempted unauthorized adoption and the authorities' reaction had discouraged any further attempts.

7. Replying to Mr. Rabah, she said that the institutions were visited regularly by social welfare inspectors. The main problem was that those institutions viewed such inspections as a quid pro quo for the subsidies they received from the State and were less likely to cooperate when the funds were not forthcoming.

8. She willingly admitted that Guinean society, which was overwhelmingly Muslim and in favour of a high birth rate, disapproved of abortion. Abortions were therefore usually performed clandestinely, making it difficult to establish statistics. However, the secular nature of the State was written into the Guinean Constitution and the Shariah was not applicable in public life.

9. With regard to the prevention of malnutrition, a national nutrition programme was currently under way and its aim was, inter alia, to eliminate changes in eating habits caused by urbanization and to boost local products. In that connection, the Government's decision to stop giving wholesalers foreign exchange to import foreign rice, which was cheaper and discouraged local producers, had also been helpful in promoting food security. In the field of child-disease prevention, Guinea was an example for the rest of Africa, notably for its immunization coverage against the main children's diseases. NGOs were very active in that field and a number of sensitization and primary-care programmes were currently being implemented with the cooperation of UNICEF, WHO and other donors. A campaign against STDs and AIDS had also been launched. Awareness-raising messages on television and in the press had been reasonably successful. The involvement of the Transport Workers' Union - its members were traditionally among the main transmitters of STDs - had been enthusiastic. The main problem was that those diseases were also often transmitted by refugees flocking from neighbouring war-torn countries and by Guineans who, having emigrated, especially to Côte d'Ivoire, returned to their native villages in the terminal stages of the disease. Traditional medicine was very present in Guinea and was used both for adults and for children. It was not only tolerated, but encouraged, since it had been part of the medical school curriculum for over 20 years under the auspices of OAU, which had published an African pharmacopoeia. Despite some resistance, relations between traditional doctors and so-called "modern" doctors were relatively cordial. Noting that more than 90 per cent of traditional doctors dispensing care to children were women, the Government had decided to launch a community health campaign not only against children's diseases, but, with the assistance of traditional medicine also to put a stop to female genital mutilation.

10. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea), replying to the question concerning adolescents involved in road accidents, said that the State had launched an awareness campaign to teach members of the Transport Workers' Union to encourage young people to be cautious. A set of driving laws had also been adopted.

11. In the field of education, it had to be acknowledged that there were not enough libraries for children, but there were great hopes for the network set up by commune mayors eager to promote the rights of the child.

12. While everyone recognized that all children should attend school, ensuring that they did so was not without problems and, in urban areas in particular, the State had allowed private initiatives to be taken to compensate for shortcomings. The situation was different in rural areas, where the State intervened on a large scale, took care of teacher training and appointments and ensured that schools were properly run. The Guinean authorities relied heavily on the private sector and international cooperation to encourage more girls to attend school. Some outstanding initiatives with regard to leisure activities had also been taken to use local materials to manufacture toys for children from deprived backgrounds. There was no sex education programme as such, but awareness campaigns had been launched in schools to encourage the use of condoms, but funds for those campaigns were also in short supply. To promote equality between boys and girls, an Equity Committee had been entrusted with the task of teaching more modern ideas and school textbooks had been revised and all the stereotypes they conveyed had been removed. Teachers had also attended workshops and learned to stop teaching outdated behaviour patterns. The parent-teacher associations were dynamic and helped resolve a great many problems. When the communes needed to build schools, for example, the associations helped raise funds. Every effort was being made to increase the enrolment rate from the current 51 per cent to 90 per cent by 2008, without losing sight of the fact that schools had to prepare children for their entry into working life.

13. In conclusion, he explained that applicants for jobs in children's homes and orphanages had to submit a file to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Children, which recruited the staff of those establishments.

14. Mrs. DIABY (Guinea) said that there were two types of adoption: simple adoption, by which a child was entrusted to a member of the family or taken in by a family friend, and perfect adoption, in which the person adopting could file an official adoption request with the courts and give the child his name, provided that there was an age difference of at least 15 years between him and the adopted child. The Guinean Civil Code recognized international adoption, and that meant a foreign adult could adopt a Guinean child. All international adoptions went through diplomatic channels; in other words, a foreign family wishing to adopt a child first submitted an application to the Guinean embassy in its country. The application was then transmitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later to the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children.

15. When a father abandoned the family home and a complaint was filed against him by his wife or in the event of divorce, a civil court ruled on the matter and determined the amount of the maintenance allowance, depending on

the husband's resources. Judicial remedies were available in the event of failure to pay the maintenance allowance. Family violence could also be prosecuted in the courts.

16. Progress had been made in combating AIDS, but special facilities to take care of children with AIDS were still very inadequate.

17. Pregnant women could go to a specialized institute in Conakry for nutrition counselling.

18. Replying to a question on the country's suicide rate, she said that suicide was not a problem in Guinea, where religion continued to play a dominant role.

19. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children was trying to make the population aware of the negative aspects of arranged or endogamous unions and "cradle" or early marriages. In that connection as well, programmes would be required to change attitudes and behaviour.

20. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that people married for money in Guinea, as in all countries. There were, of course, rich merchants who wished to marry young girls from large families who agreed for financial reasons, but that was not a very common practice. In any case, the legislation prohibited marriage between a man and a woman when the age difference was more than 25 years in order to prevent the most blatant cases.

21. Sex education courses in schools were undeniably important, but what made them effective was mainly skill in conveying ideas without offending parents' sensitivity or prompting children to engage in licentious behaviour.

22. All persons had their place in Guinean society - children, adults, the disabled, the elderly - and the high quality of human relations made for close family and social ties.

23. Part of the Conakry socio-medical centre had been set aside for mentally handicapped persons and their parents following a subregional workshop for West Africa held in 1997.

24. One member of the Committee had asked whether the very high teacher-pupil ratio - or supervision rate - might not explain the country's high drop-out rate. It was true that, under pressure from the population's great demand for education, associations and NGOs had built schools and there were now more schools than teachers. Unfortunately, there were sometimes more than 100 children per class. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children was working in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Civic Education to establish a national social service by which young diploma-holders would work for one or two years in social services, such as education, health, agriculture, environmental protection, and thus help compensate for the shortage of teachers.

25. Polygamy had an undeniably traumatizing effect on children, but it was wrong to say that it was authorized by the Koran. What was true, however, was that men had interpreted Islamic law to suit themselves. With a view to

curbing that deplorable tendency, the Guinean authorities were trying to explain to women that Islam did not authorize a man to have several wives. The practice had been going on for centuries, however, and it could not be abolished in a day.

26. The unlawful sale of medicaments continued to be a problem. A law prohibited it, but its enforcement left much to be desired, owing to the lack of resources. A seven-phase interministerial campaign against the unlawful sale of medicaments had been set in motion. The third phase was currently under way, but it was a lengthy process because the authorities wished to be sure of eliminating the scourge once and for all.

27. In reply to a question by Mrs. Palme on freedom of association, she said that there was an order allowing associations to be formed in the country, provided that they were apolitical. Civic training for young people was provided by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Civic Education. Generally speaking, there was very keen political awareness among the population, perhaps because the country had been governed for 25 years by a single party which had had a very strong ideological grip. Political debate in Guinea was often organized along tribal or ethnic lines and, by getting involved, NGOs were very helpful in reducing tensions among the parties. The Equity Committee, which had existed for many years, was at present being restructured to make it more effective.

28. In conclusion, she said that, in order to achieve all its objectives, Guinea would need the support of the international community, especially in the form of technical assistance and North-South and South-South exchanges.

29. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Guinean delegation to reply to the unanswered questions on the following topics: the impact of ethnic tensions on children; measures in favour of disabled children; the implementation of the mother-and-infant programme; the school meals programme for poor children; prevention of alcoholism and drug abuse; the reintegration of child victims of armed conflicts; the monitoring of children in foster care and action to combat malaria and the ill-treatment of children in institutions.

30. Mrs. MBOI asked what measures the Government was taking to enhance the quality of education and school performance, to improve immunization coverage which, according to WHO, had apparently fallen between 1994 and 1997, to implement the Bamaki initiative and to improve the quality and accessibility of health care. In that connection, did the Government plan to increase the health budget and collaborate with WHO?

31. It would also be useful to know whether the anti-HIV/AIDS campaign had proved effective, whether measures were being taken to encourage young people to use condoms and to prevent the mother-to-infant transmission of the virus. As things stood, certain projections put the number of children whose parents would have died of AIDS by the year 2005 at 100,000. The Guinean delegation might also wish to indicate what obstacles the Government was encountering, especially in terms of attitudes, in the implementation of its family-planning policy.

32. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that elections sometimes involved inter-ethnic violence which reflected political divisions and of which children were the main victims. During the last presidential elections, the Ministry of Decentralization and the Interior had therefore launched a broad awareness campaign calling on citizens to vote peacefully. The policy had worked and would therefore be reintroduced for the municipal elections due to take place in six months' time.

33. There was a community rehabilitation programme for disabled persons and the State had created a school for deaf-mutes, a school for the blind and an institute for young blind people. During the current year, the State would be spending US$ 250,000 to finish building an institute for young blind people in Kankan, in an area where river blindness was endemic. Moreover, a US$ 15,000 loan had recently been made available to buy equipment for the speech-therapy laboratory at the school for deaf-mutes. With the collaboration of Handicap International, moreover, the State would create an equipment centre for the disabled in the country's three main cities.

34. She pointed out that the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children had not been involved in the implementation of social programmes, such as the mother-and-infant programme and the programme of psychological care for child victims of violence and therefore did not have statistics that could be used to evaluate their effectiveness. The Ministry hoped very shortly to join the monitoring committee for those programmes, including the Programme of Psychological Support for Refugee Children, in which UNHCR was taking part, in order to have a say in their implementation.

35. As far as nutrition was concerned, the Government was carrying out a school meals project for poor children in kindergartens and day-care centres in cooperation with the World Food Programme. The country's First Lady had had a kindergarten for the children of underprivileged families built and it would open soon.

36. With regard to drug addiction, the Government had concluded a number of agreements with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNIDCP). Technical assistance in that field was sorely needed. UNESCO was also helping Guinea set up a shelter for young drug addicts.

37. As to the monitoring of children placed in foster homes, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children did not have the necessary resources to guarantee the enforcement of the relevant legislation.

38. Food security, health and education were the Government's three main priorities. Sixty per cent of civil servants worked for the Ministries of Health and Education. Thousands of classrooms had been built in the past three years and teacher training had been strengthened. Aware that education was the key to development, the Government was borrowing to invest in that sector.

39. The Association of Women Engineers had worked with the Guinean Federation of Associations of Disabled Persons to draft a bill on improved access for the disabled to public buildings.

40. Problems linked to sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS, alcoholism and drug addiction, were being aggravated by the inflow of refugees from neighbouring countries. In this connection as well, the Government was unable to remedy the situation because it did not have enough resources.

41. Family planning had hitherto been seen as a medical matter. For such a policy to be effective, it was necessary to sensitize the population and change attitudes, particularly by involving young people, women's organizations and religious leaders in its implementation.

42. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea), in reply to question 26 on the list of issues, said that Guinea currently provided shelter for over 1 million refugees from neighbouring countries. No budget item was directly earmarked for refugee children, but the Government had set up a national coordination office, the staff and operating costs of which were charged to the national development budget.

43. Replying to question 27, he said that all placements of children in institutions (orphanages, homes, shelters) came under the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women and Children. An institute for young blind people, a rehabilitation centre for young people in conflict with the law and a reception and guidance centre for street children had been built in Kankan, Kindia and Conakry, respectively, for the physical and psychological rehabilitation and social reintegration of the adolescents concerned.

44. Replying to question 28, he said that minors were separated from adults in the main prison in Conakry. There were plans to build minors' quarters in the country's main prisons. With regard to the living conditions of detained minors, the Government had provided training for prison staff in collaboration with UNICEF and items such as mats, blankets and shoes were distributed to young detainees.

45. In reply to question 29, he said that there was a consultative committee on labour and social legislation. Advisory commissions had been established by job sector, with the assistance of the National Office for Vocational and Further Training in order to train child apprentices. A 1998 survey had put the numbers of young apprentices at 50,000 in Conakry alone.

46. In order to combat drug trafficking (question 30), the Government had set up a national anti-drug committee and a central anti-drug office which had begun cooperating with the African Anti-Drug Programme.

47. In reply to question 30, he acknowledged that data collection on sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children was inadequate. Guinea lacked staff with the skills to perform that task and also encountered cultural problems. There were, however, plans to conduct a survey on that topic in 1999, to be funded by UNICEF and the ILO. The Government was nevertheless cooperating with NGOs that were conducting training, awareness and prevention activities for young people who were most exposed to such practices.

48. In reply to question 32, it should be pointed out that children from ethnic minorities in Guinea enjoyed no special rights because, under the Constitution, all citizens were equal before the law. However, it must be

admitted that inequalities in access to education and social services did exist, especially in the more remote areas, a situation exacerbated by the influx of refugees. In December 1998 and January 1999 alone, Guinea had accepted 100,000 new refugees, many of them children.

49. Mrs. MBOI urged the Guinean Government to conduct a study on the sexual exploitation of children and to prepare a strategy to combat that practice. She believed that many girls prostituted themselves in order to increase their family income.

50. Furthermore, she understood that there was no minimum legal age for consent to sexual relations. Did that mean that a man who had sexual relations with a very young girl was not penalized?

51. It would also be useful to know how many minors were in detention and what measures had been taken to prevent the sexual abuse of which they might be victims.

52. On the subject of child labour, the Guinean delegation might indicate how it gave effect to article 32 of the Convention, which recognized the right of the child to be protected from performing any work that was likely to interfere with his education or to be harmful to his health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

53. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked what the State party intended to do to improve the detention conditions of young offenders. According to some sources, children had died during detention from malnutrition and disease.

54. It would also be useful to know what measures the State had taken to teach children respect for the natural environment (art. 29 of the Convention).

55. The Guinean Government might also inform the Committee of the areas in which international cooperation could be strengthened.

56. Mrs. PALME said that she would like to have more specific information on how the Government dealt with the problem of refugees, the majority of whom were children. With regard to children in detention and in conflict with the law, the report showed that the Government had interesting projects, but lacked the means to execute them. It was regrettable that there were no special institutions for young offenders and that they could be sentenced to very long terms (up to 10 years in prison). The fact that the punishment of minors guilty of certain offences was left to the discretion of a police court (para. 114 of the report) might well give rise to violations of the rights of the child. On the question of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the Guinean Government could perhaps draw inspiration from the Declaration and Plan of Action of the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. It would also be a good idea for it to establish cooperation with UNICEF and neighbouring countries on a global plan of action to deal with those problems.

57. Mr. RABAH, referring to the sentences imposed on minors, said that there was a contradiction between the last sentence of paragraph 105 and the last

sentence of paragraph 115 of the report. He would like to know exactly what the situation of young offenders detained at police stations was. Since the number of minors in prison seemed to be very low, it could be asked what obstacles were preventing the construction of rehabilitation centres. Were minors entitled to legal aid? Were they followed up by social workers on their release from prison and what types of offence did they usually commit? It might be a good idea for new legislation to be prepared for young offenders with a view to improving the administration of justice for minors in the years to come. Did judges, lawyers and social workers in contact with young offenders receive special training?

58. Mr. KOLOSOV said that it was rather difficult to take part in the preparation of conclusions and recommendations on the report before receiving all the replies - and full replies at that - to the questions asked. He would therefore like the delegation to reply to the question on the existence or otherwise of recreational facilities and libraries designed especially for children, as well as paediatric health-care centres dealing particularly with children suffering from AIDS and children of drug addicts. Replies had been given on the facilities for adults, but children's problems were special and different. With regard to the introduction of private schools, it might be asked whether they were accessible to all and whether teachers in those schools received wages comparable to those in public schools. Was apprenticeship regarded simply as a pretext for making children work and were young girls ever employed as domestic servants? Did the Guinean Government know of any cases in which Guinean children were enlisted as mercenaries by parties to conflicts in neighbouring States?

59. The report showed that Guinea had good plans, but lacked the resources to implement them. He therefore recommended that it should adopt only realistic plans, designed on the basis of resources available either in the country or internationally. It was better not to adopt plans that were not backed up by the necessary financial resources so as to avoid discouraging those responsible for executing them. He was convinced that the African continent would play a very important role in the development of civilization during the forthcoming millennium, and that was why the Committee was paying so much attention to Guinea, an African country with a great future.

60. Mrs. MOKHUANE said that she would like to know whether pregnancy prevention programmes were effective, given the high rate of teenage pregnancies and the large number of early marriages and marriages of young women whose first child was not wanted. She inquired whether surveys had been conducted to evaluate women's attitudes to contraceptives. She stressed that access to psychological care was a right of the child under the Convention. She noted that most care for children was provided in the social welfare sector rather than in the psychological field. Nothing was said about adolescents in that connection in the report under consideration. It would be useful to have further information about what adolescents in Guinea thought of themselves and their situation under the Convention. The problems of malnutrition and low birth weight influenced a child's cognitive functions. In that connection, the report showed that post-natal treatment was very inadequate. The problem of mental disorders in children could therefore not be minimal, as the Guinean delegation claimed. The report was also silent on the number of children suffering from attention disorders or slight cerebral

dysfunctions and on the psychopathology of young children in general. She therefore wished to have more information on what the Government intended to do to deal with the question of psycho-social care as a right of the child. Lastly, she inquired whether the Guinean Government had a policy for encouraging informal play activities in children aged one to three.

61. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that, since it had been shown that refugees were scattered across Guinean territory, she wished to know how they were registered and housed and how programmes designed for them were implemented if they were not grouped together. It was alarming to learn that government social services did not take part in the programme for refugees, 65 per cent of whom were children. Was that because cooperation with UNHCR was limited or because the Government itself was unable to take account of certain concerns, particularly sectoral concerns, involving refugee children? The situation was not clear and called for more detailed explanations.

62. With regard to the situation of children in conflict with the law, she would like to know the maximum period for which minors could be detained and whether any thought had been given to community service programmes for them. Was care taken to isolate minors from hardened criminals? It had been said that a literacy and small-craft apprenticeship centre had been established in Conakry prison. Were there plans to replicate it in other prisons? That type of approach was to be encouraged so that children in detention could continue their development and begin working life with some skills. The Guinean delegation had also said that no study had been undertaken on child domestics. She strongly encouraged the Government to carry out such a study because children had been found to be particularly vulnerable to exploitation and measures to protect them were needed. Lastly, trade in children was a serious problem in the subregion. In view of the cases that had occurred, what measures had been taken to protect children, especially under the subregional initiative that had been launched?

63. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether children were liable to corporal punishment, as seemed to be the case for adult offenders. She would like to be assured that the provisions of the Convention concerning imprisonment without trial and excessive delay in appearance before a court were being properly enforced. Were there any measures for an alternative to imprisonment for children and was any thought being given to action to prevent minors from getting into trouble with the justice system? Concerning the trade in children, were there any plans to sign bilateral agreements to monitor children crossing borders?

64. Summing up Committee members' preliminary comments on the initial report of Guinea, she said that, despite the Guinean delegation's assurances that the Convention formed part of internal law, the legislation in force should be amended and reviewed to ensure that its provisions were in conformity with those of the Convention. The Guinean Committee to Monitor Protection of the Rights of Children should receive all the support it deserved. With regard to budget allocations, while there had been some increase for education, it was uncertain whether health was on the same footing and, in that regard, the Committee drew attention to the provisions of article 4 of the Convention. Appropriate attention should also be given to the dissemination of the Convention, whether with the participation of children themselves or of civil

society in general. The general principles of the Convention should be discussed at all levels of society. In that regard, it was not known to what extent children participated in the promotion of the Convention. In the Committee's view, the fact that the age of marriage was set at 17 for girls and 18 for boys was discriminatory. The principle of the best interests of the child needed to be better understood: it was applicable not only in legal matters, but in all areas of a child's life. The fact that civil rights and fundamental freedoms were guaranteed by the Constitution did not mean that children automatically enjoyed them. Freedom of association, for instance, and freedom of opinion and religion were matters of concern in a society such as Guinea's, in which children were considered to be answerable to their parents and their families until they reached the age of 21. Where family environment and replacement protection were concerned, members took note of the Guinean delegation's replies concerning polygamy and adoption, as well as the commitment to ratify the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993). Guinea's position on intercountry adoption nevertheless called for more in-depth study: adoption procedures should be governed by legal mechanisms and not left to the discretion of diplomats. Under the heading of "health and welfare", there had been considerable discussion of malnutrition and its effects on children's health and development. The establishment of specific programmes and strategies to combat HIV/AIDS in children, as well as the place in society of children suffering from AIDS, had given rise to concern: HIV/AIDS was a new phenomenon and there were still many prejudices about the manner in which it was transmitted and its potential implications for the family. With regard to education, the Committee considered that teacher training and the supervision rate still left much to be desired. Greater attention also needed to be given to infrastructure, teachers' salaries, which directly affected the viability of the education system and the protection and development of children. Although it was illegal to administer corporal punishment within the school system, it might well be asked whether such punishment was not still practised as a form of discipline both in the home and at school and in other institutions, including the system of juvenile justice.

65. In any event, there was no doubt that Guinean children were in very good hands and she congratulated the Guinean delegation on the skill with which it had answered the questions asked by the members of the Committee. She appealed to it to disseminate the Convention as widely as possible on its return home.

66. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that she was impressed by the interest the members of the Committee had shown in the situation of children in Guinea. Having ratified the Convention, Guinea had given itself the means of fulfilling the international commitment it had made. The State was aware that children were the country's future and that improving their situation meant improving the living conditions of the population as a whole. Her delegation had learned many lessons from its discussions with the members of the Committee. It had been struck by the frankness and sincerity of the members' questions and by their requirement that the replies should be specific. In view of the late hour, it would unfortunately be unable to satisfy their curiosity to the full, but it undertook to send the Committee the replies it

had not been able to provide at the current session, in writing, as soon as possible. On its return to Guinea, it would speak to the Head of State, the entire Government and the population on the Committee's behalf. Guinea was not only brutally short of material and financial resources, but it also needed to exchange ideas; that was why she had personally been pleased to participate in the discussion which had taken place and for which she thanked all members of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.